PROVINCIAL CHILDCARE COUNCIL

Annual Report

April 2001

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Report From The Chair

Provincial Child Care Council

The Provincial Child Care Council is a diverse group of people from across the province who bring with them one consistent and unwavering goal: a child care system developed in this province that is accessible, affordable, accountable and available to all B.C. families.

Child care has been the focus of a major social policy initiative in B.C. during the past year. As members of the Provincial Child Care Council, it has been exciting to be part of that process.

The October 1999 release of the discussion paper ***Building a Better Future for BC's Kids*** was the beginning of change for child care in this province. More than 10,000 parents, caregivers, advocates and other interested individuals responded to the paper, and clearly indicated the need for a publicly funded child care system.

The past year has also seen the release of a number of different research papers, which confirm that the quality of care children receive in their early years is the most important factor in their success in school and in later life. The research shows that children who attend quality child care programs develop as strong, healthy individuals with well developed cognitive abilities, language skills and school readiness.

In addition, the council was very pleased to see British Columbia take the first concrete steps towards a publicly funded child care system with the introduction of publicly funded group out-of-school care in January 2001, and the passing of the *Child Care BC Act* in April 2001. The new act:

- sets out a budget and structure for Child Care BC,
- legislates the number of funded child care spaces that will be created, and
- sets the maximum rate parents will pay for child care at $14 per day per child when the new structure is in place.

Working with the council is an honour. I am impressed by the knowledge, competence and passion shown by all members and by their ability to stand united for quality child care services. I look forward to a final year as the chair of the council. I know that child care will continue to face challenges but I am optimistic about its future.

Council's Mandate

The Provincial Child Care Council was created in May 1993, by the Minister of Women's Equality, to provide advice and expertise about child care to the Minister.

In 1997, the responsibility for child care was transferred from the Ministry of Women's Equality to the Ministry for Children and Families. In July 1999, the responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development & Economic Security.

In April 2001, the new *Child Care BC Act* was passed. The new Act describes the Provincial Child Care Council in the following way:

Provincial Child Care Council

2. (1) In this section, **"council"** means the Provincial Child Care Council continued under this Act.

(2) The council may make recommendations

(a) to the minister about child care under this Act, and

(b) to the minister responsible for the *BC Benefits (Child Care Subsidy) Act* about child care subsidies under that Act.

(3) The council consists of at least 14 and not more than 21 members, each of whom is appointed by the minister and one or more of whom is designated by the minister to chair council meetings.

(4) The minister may set the term of office of any member of the council.

(5) The minister may

(a) reimburse the members for reasonable travelling and out of pocket expenses necessarily incurred by them in attending council meetings, and

(b) pay the members a fee set by the minister in accordance with the general directives of Treasury Board.

Council's Vision

At its inaugural meeting in May 1993, council created a vision of child care for British Columbia that there will be:

- linkages between families, communities and government about child care issues,
- province-wide communication,
- a greater responsibility for child care accepted by society,
- an understanding and valuing of diversity,
- clarity in the partnerships between ministries that have an interest in child care,
- new initiatives to create partnerships with other ministries,
- coordination of all government child care initiatives,
- care for the caregiver,
- increased access to early childhood education training,

- employer roles and employee responsibilities,
- identify barriers to quality care and become a catalyst for change,
- Changes to the child care system will be driven by what is important for families,
- quality care everywhere, and
- inter-provincial bridges that connect early childhood care and education systems into a national child care and education agenda.

Principles of Child Care

Council has identified a series of principles to guide evaluation of new directions in child care in BC.

- A commitment to the recommendations contained in the Child Care Task Force Report "Showing We Care" as the guiding document for change.
- Changes to the child care subsidy system that removes the "welfare" stigma associated with the present system.
- Development of a new "made in BC program" that includes the needs of all children, parents and child care providers regardless of location, ethnic origin or need for supports.
- Stabilization of the child care delivery system by addressing the pressing financial and administrative constraints that child care is presently experiencing.
- Implementation of ministry-led child care initiatives, which result in net benefit or improvement to the overall quality of child care in the province.
- Development of community infrastructure in a manner that enhances parents' ability to gain access to affordable, quality child care.

During the next year the Provincial Child Care Council will be revising and reviewing the Vision and Principles to reflect growth and change in our field over the last decade.

Council's Role

While most council members are not official representatives of the specific organizations or regions where they work, volunteer and live, they do feel accountable to the constituencies from which they come. Council members deeply value their connection and communication with the community. It is invaluable in informing them about the day-to-day impact of the policies and programs that are discussed at the council meetings. Points of view from communities across the province are seriously considered in any advice or recommendations made to the Minister.

At the same time, council members are concerned about their ability to live up to community expectations about their role

as advocates at the council table. Council is not a decision-making body and does not have the ability to 'fix things.' Council members can and do offer their best advice to those who do make the decisions.

Council found that a definition of advocacy, offered by BC's Child, Youth and Family Advocate, helpful.

> *"Put most simply — effective advocacy is about welcoming people into the decision-making process by ensuring that their voices are heard and considered in decisions that are made about their lives. When this is done well, better decisions are made."*

While council is not mandated to address the specific concerns of individuals, children, families or caregivers, it does have a responsibility to ensure that a wide range of voices and opinions are heard and considered in the policy decisions that are made about child care. Council members see this as a positive and constructive approach and are committed to continuing to reflect the views heard from the community in the advice that it offers to the Minister. In this way, advocacy will continue to be an important part of the work undertaken.

Council Meetings

The council held three two-day meetings all in Richmond.
May 25 and 26, 2000
October 12 and 13, 2000
January 11 and 12, 2001

Highlights of Council's Meetings

- Discussion and planning around the implementation of Child Care BC.
- Met with a representative of the Ministry of Health to discuss the child care licensing regulations.
- Council has been monitoring the effect of how the Munroe Agreement will affect child care in the province.
- A Long-Range Planning Working Group was created in July to provide input to the Child Care Policy Branch staff.
- Provincial Child Care Council had members sitting on the Minister's Implementation Tables for the new initiative, Child Care BC.
- Council continues to support the implementation of a "Contracts for Services Funding Model for Child Care" as reported in council's previous draft report (of the same name) sent to the Minister in June 1997.
- Council continues to monitor the development of Supported Child Care Services through-out the province.

About Council Members

Council members are appointed by the Minister of Social Development and Economic Security for a two-year term of office and may be re-appointed for a further two year term. Members are drawn from a number of communities and different perspectives, providing a diverse and comprehensive representation to council. Their names, home community and interests in child care are:

Chairpersons:

	Home Community	Child Care Interests
Sheila Davidson, Chair,	White Rock	Group/Employer
Shelly Chrest, Vice Chair	Delta	Community/Advocacy

Members:

Warner Adam	Prince George	First Nations
Oscar Allueva	Vancouver	Full Range/Employer
Peter Ashmore	Creston	Infant/Toddler/Rural
Moyra Baxter	Peachland	Education
Mary Catherine Bellamy	Courtenay	Private Owner Operator
Jane Boyd	Langley	Work-Life
Kim Brooks	North Vancouver	First Nations
Lynn Burgat	Kelowna	Child Care Resource & Referral
Beth Carter	Cranbrook	Supported Child Care
Maureen Feeney	Vancouver	Labour
Anita Ferriss	Nanaimo	Infant/Toddler/Training
Christine MacLeod	Delta	Family Child Care
Maria Socorro Nguyen	Burnaby	Immigrant/Refugee
Mengia Nicholson	Revelstoke	Health/Education
Catherine Richardson	Cowichan Bay	Metis/Training
Astrid Visscher	Vancouver	School Age Care
Darlene Westerman	Terrace	Rural/Northern/One Stop Access